

Daily Living Activity 8: Reading and understanding signs, symbols and words

Descriptors	Points
a. Can read and understand basic and complex written information either unaided or using spectacles or contact lenses.	0
b. Needs to use an aid or appliance, other than spectacles or contact lenses, to be able to read or understand either basic or complex written information.	2
c. Needs prompting to be able to read or understand complex written information.	2
d. Needs prompting to be able to read or understand basic written information.	4
e. Cannot read or understand signs, symbols or words at all.	8

Legislative Definitions

“Basic written information” means signs, symbols and dates written or printed standard size text in the claimant’s native language.

“Complex written information” means more than one sentence of written or printed standard size text in the claimant’s native language.

Select Case Law

- [KP v SSWP \(PIP\) \[2017\] UKUT 0030 \(AAC\)](#) – Illiteracy must be caused by a physical or mental condition which has limited the person’s ability to read, or which has prevented the person from learning to read [para 16]
- [SSWP v SH \(PIP\) \[2017\] UKUT 301 \(AAC\)](#) – Tribunal erred as fixated on ability to read official letters when anxious. It must make a rounded consideration of all the available evidence to determine entitlement. As with GJ v SSWP [2016] UKUT 8 above, it is the legislative meaning not the dictionary meaning. *Basic information for the purpose of PIP is very basic indeed, and complex written information is hardly more so.* [para 5]
- [JG v SSWP \(PIP\) \[2018\] UKUT 95 \(AAC\)](#) – In this case it was argued that sign language did not have a written form and therefore it was not possible to read the native language. However, this was rejected:

20. In a situation such as this one it will, depending on the facts, be open to a tribunal to conclude that a claimant has the native languages of both BSL and English. If there are two native languages and only one of them has a written component, then the tribunal will have to assess the ability to read or understand complex written information and / or basic written information in that language. In the context of this appeal then, the tribunal's task will be to evaluate the claimant's abilities to read or understand to the requisite standards in English.

However, advisers should note that this case comments on the impact of the physical condition of deafness on the ability to read:

21. ... But it seems to me that it may well be a factor capable of restricting or inhibiting a claimant's ability to learn so, depending on the circumstances, it may have an adverse impact upon an ability to read or understand.

- [SE v SSWP \(Interim Decision\) \[2021\] UKUT 1 \(AAC\)](#); [SE v SSWP \(Final Decision\) \[2021\] AACR 5](#) - The reference to signs, symbols and dates in the definition of basic written information should be interpreted as the ability to read the actual basic words that accompany these signs or dates (e.g. 'Stop'; 'Give Way'; Friday or January).

Significantly – If the claimant satisfies the criteria for descriptor 8(d), they will automatically also satisfy the higher scoring descriptor 8(e):

19. I interpret the "at all" in (e) "Cannot read or understand signs, symbols or words at all" not as requiring total inability to read any word, but as requiring an inability to do so to the extent involved in descriptor (d).

- [DfC v MS \(PIP\) \[2020\] NICom 77](#) - Referencing findings in [KP v SSWP](#) that illiteracy needed to be connected to a health condition, the Commissioner clarifies that Article 83(1)(a) requires the ability to read to be "limited by" the claimant's physical or mental condition. Therefore, it is open to a tribunal to carefully find that a child that simply never learned in school may be functionally restricted in the activity of reading at a later stage in life through a mental health condition which limited the ability or motivation to learn.